Progressive Calvinism

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Progressive Calvinism Is Rationalistic

1. One of several interesting conclusions to which we have come after considerable observation and reflection is this: modern Calvinism, and specifically the Calvinism prevailing in the Christian Reformed church, is essentially Fundamentalism in supernatural and eschatological matters, *plus the social gospel.*

2. A second conclusion in a sequence of related ideas is: The trouble with the world is not the "world." To the contrary, the trouble with the world is the "Christian" church. The trouble with the world is not Buddhism, nor Mohammedanism, nor communism, nor atheism, but "Christianity" whenever Christianity is defined as being the social gospel. In other words, one of the great evils in the world is the *social* gospel.

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3. A third conclusion in this sequence of related ideas is: We are opposed to a certain irrationalism in Calvinist churches, an irrationalism which consists in contrasting faith with either reason or experience. In a sense then, *we* are "rationalists." By that we mean that we consider faith as operating properly only in the concerns of men which are beyond what is verifiable. What can be "known" does not require faith. Matters of ethics, the relation of men to men, are not matters of faith, in the sense that faith will (can?) give an answer contrary to experience and *consequently* of reason, reason being nothing more than a knowledge of experience, actually observed or deduceable from experience. Ethics, then, for us, is a *science,* and not merely an authoritarian system of morality. It is, for us, *both.*

4. A fourth conclusion in this sequence of related ideas is: If the social gospel is Christianity, then Christianity is false. The social gospel is contrary to the *science* of ethics.

5. A fifth conclusion in this sequence of related ideas is: If a religion, which declares itself to be revelation, is in error and is untrustworthy in the field of the science of ethics, there is then no rational ground for faith in its declarations pertaining to the supernatural and the eschatological. Why believe a religion in matters where it is unverifiable, when you already know that it is not to be believed where it is verifiable?

6. A sixth conclusion in this sequence of related ideas is this: That the Hebrew-Christian religion in its ethics *is reliable,* and that *consequently for us* its teachings on matters beyond knowledge is also reliable.

This issue and later issues are devoted to these ideas.

There are, it seems to us, at least two obvious requirements which must be met if ethics is to qualify as a science. These requirements, for our nontechnical thinking, are (1) the *eventual long-term* results must be beneficial, because all human action involves purpose and the purpose must be to attain some supposed benefit; (2) the means must be effective to attain the end sought; in that sense the means must be rational and logical. But the effect of item (2) on item (1) is that *the operation of cause and effect eliminates eventually undesirable objectives.* The use of effective

means to attain those objectives which are thought to be desirable but which are in fact undesirable results in a revision (correction) of the objectives.

We end up then with three things which are, in our thinking, identical in the field of ethics and morality, towit: (1) experience; (2) reason; and (3) revelation. That is what makes us rationalistic, and hostile to irrationalism.

The two men who have had the most influence on our thinking in these matters are a lawgiver, Moses (c. 1480-1360 B.C.) and an economist, Mises (1881-). Most of our readers know about Moses. In this issue we are introducing Mises, the economist.

Our eventual purpose is to show that the social gospel *cannot* be reconciled either with the *science* of ethics or with the revelation through Moses. This is a large task. We may never complete it. But we are making a beginning.

In making this approach to the principles of ethics which Calvinism should promote because they are "scientific," we are not going off on a tangent away from Scripture. Instead we are jarred back on our heels and induced to accept, even more than formerly, the ethical teachings of Scripture. We are confident that our readers who will carefully follow the presentation will derive the same benefit. fn

Suggestions To Women Who Have Ambitions For Their Men

If you have a son or a young husband whom you hope will be a "success" in life, and if you wish to help him at the beginning of his career in a practical manner, what do you recommend to him, and endeavor to arrange for him?

We suggest two specific programs; (there are others, of course):

1. Advocate that he get employment directly under a very superior man; and

2. Urge that he find, and restrict his reading to, very superior books — the best books of all time.

Such an "environment" — his working for a distinctly superior employer and his reading only the best books — will spectacularly help your son or husband in his career.

Fortune plays a part in both of these factors which are so influential toward success, but especially in regard to the first.

Not everybody can obtain work under very superior men. There are not enough of such men. A young man setting out in life is usually ignorant regarding *who* would be a superior employer (valuable to the young man for training and discipline). *Who* a young man's employer will be is largely a matter of chance.

The opportunity is in a sense better in regard to selecting superior books. Several lists of Great Books have been compiled. They are valuable. But in our estimation no Great Books reading list, that we know, is satisfactory in the field of praxeology (the social sciences).

We are presenting a series of reviews of certain essays in a book entitled *God-Centered Living or Calvinism in Action* (see October and November 1956 issues of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM). The ideas in those selected essays are at times erroneous and defective but not because of personal deficiencies of the writers. These men write about Christian action without revealing that they have ever read the really great, modern books in praxeology. They quote other authors (and are obviously influenced by them) who are, there is good reason to believe, certainly not *great* authors but *popular* secondary authors proclaiming the intellectual fads, follies and iniquities of the age — the Niebuhrs, the Tawneys, the Bouldings, the Schlesingers, etc. The authors of some of the essays in *God-Centered Living* never have had the good fortune to "pick up the scent" of the really great books, and consequently they could not follow that trail as bloodhounds.

The well-known lists of Great Books always list Adam Smith and David Ricardo and they usually list John Stuart Mill and Malthus, four of the most famous of the so-called English classical economists. But these men were *early* pioneers in economics. They

did great work (especially Smith and Ricardo) but their work has been largely superseded by later writers.

There is an "error" in slavish acceptance of the books in a "Great Books" list. In rapidly developing sciences, reading the *early* great books in those sciences gives valuable knowledge of the *history* of that science. But life is too short to cover the history of thought in many sciences. Because of the limited time available, a man should concentrate on the *later* modern great books in such sciences. This is especially true in economics.

We are not declaring that the later great thinkers in a science, because they worked better, *necessarily* therefore had minds superior to their predecessors. Those who came after should do better work because they could build on their great predecessors. Modern great economists have certainly done so.

Who are, in economics, some of the really great, modern successors to Adam Smith and David Ricardo? Who are the men whose writings it is preferable to read instead of Smith or Ricardo, even though none of them is presently so well known as these two? We submit the names of four men and the individual books by which they are best known:

Carl Menger: *Principles of Economics,* The Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois, 1950, 328 pages, $5.00.

Eugen von Böhm-Bawerk: *Capital and Interest* (in three volumes). A new English translation will soon be available.

Ludwig von Mises: *Human Action,* Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut, 1949, 889 pages, $10.00.

Friedrich von Hayek: *The Road to Serfdom,* The University of Chicago Press, 1944, 240 pages, $3.00.

As an undergraduate at a university in our youth we took an advanced English course during the summer quarter. The class was small. One of the fellow students with whom we associated, declared he intended to be a literary critic. We asked him why. He answered: "Because I know that my judgment is excellent in regard to literature; and the professors here confirm me in that

opinion." In regard to books in the field of economics, our opinion of our own judgment is identical with the opinion of our friend in regard to his judgment of books in the field of literature.

We plan over a period of time to introduce the works of these great economists to the attention of our readers. We cannot cover the field of economics fast enough nor well enough ourselves to justify letting readers wait in regard to becoming acquainted with sound economics. It is our thought that if we do no more than put readers on the trail of these great economists we shall have done our readers a substantial service. This alone will adequately reward them for subscribing to PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM.

The basic arguments of the four great authors we have mentioned have never been refuted. Not only have these men rebuilt the work of the earlier economists and obtained imperishable fame for themselves, they are also advocates of a social system which is highly *rational.* Further, not only do they favor a *rational* social system, but also a system which provides maximum *freedom.* Further, their system for society is the only one, we are surely convinced, which can be reconciled with the *teachings of Scripture,* correctly understood. Finally, their system for society is not only just but promotes *prosperity.*

The authors mentioned are writers of serious and solid texts. The average reader will have difficulty mastering some of the ideas in their books because they are so different from popular ideas. We plan over a period of time to help such readers.

Just now we recommend that readers abandon the natural order and read at once a new book, by Mises, entitled *The Anti-Capitalistic Mentality,* D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., Princeton, New Jersey, 1956, 114 pages, $3.75.

If we cannot provide ambitious young men the great opportunity that naturally arises from working directly for especially great men, we can provide them with specific knowledge regarding what are the greatest books in economics — those worth reading above all others.

The intellectual quality of men is pretty well measured by the reading that they *continue* to do — during their *whole* maturity.

fn

Ludwig Von Mises: The Anti-Capitalistic Mentality

The Question With Which The Book Begins

The Introduction of *The Anti-Capitalistic Mentality* begins as follows (pages v and vi):

> The substitution of laissez-faire capitalism for the precapitalistic methods of economic management has multiplied population figures and raised in an unprecedented way the average standard of living. A nation is the more prosperous today the less it has tried to put obstacles in the way of the spirit of free enterprise and private initiative. The people of the United States are more prosperous than the inhabitants of all other countries because their government embarked later than the governments in other parts of the world upon the policy of obstructing business. Nonetheless many people, and especially intellectuals, passionately loathe capitalism. As they see it, this ghastly mode of society's economic organization has brought about nothing but mischief and misery. Men were once happy and prosperous in the good old days preceding the "Industrial Revolution." Now under capitalism the immense majority are starving paupers ruthlessly exploited by rugged individualists. . . .
>
> The bias and bigotry of public opinion manifests itself most clearly in the fact that it attaches the epithet "capitalistic" exclusively to things abominable, never to those of which everybody approves. . . .
>
> It is the task of this essay to analyze this anti-capitalistic bias and to disclose its roots and its consequences.

Some readers will immediately sense that what Mises says regarding "many people" namely, regarding their hostility toward capitalism, is specifically true about many members in modern Calvinist churches. They dislike and criticize capitalism. They repudiate the name of capitalist for themselves. They declare that they are not socialists either. They say that they occupy a position

which (so they think) is an inbetween position, something neither capitalist nor socialist, but interventionist. This interventionism, they think, is capitalism not modified so much that it becomes socialist, but modified enough to restrain capitalism from its alleged wickedness. The restraint or modification of capitalism consists of the government *intervening* extensively into economic affairs. This interventionism is assumed to be just, righteous, helpful, God-given. The reason for this favorable opinion of interventionism is that it is assumed that governments act for God, that they are one of the "powers that be" which *must* be obeyed. Governments are all supposed to have a charisma from God, a direct pipe line of authority from Him; that is the theory or the assumption.

We once heard a Christian Reformed preacher who quoted Mussolini to show that he was a man who taught hatred. The preacher contrasted that to the teaching of Scripture about love. But we have often thought that the undertone of the teaching in the churches against capitalism is surcharged with the idea that hatred and envy are proper toward whoever else has more possessions than the person himself has.

Basically, the hatred against *capitalism in the abstract* is also a hatred against other *people*. Interventionism is generally a form of hatred. However, the interventionist type of hatred, toward *A, B* and *C,* effectively disguises itself under the pretense of being great and wonderful love toward *X, Y* and *Z*.

It should be clearly realized that Mises is exploring a question which applies to many Calvinists as well as to other people. We would phrase the question he poses in his book in this simple, specific language:

> Why does Rev. *X,* who is a preacher in a Calvinist church, why does Professor *Y* of a denominational college, and why does Mr. *Z,* elder in a church — loathe (genuinely hate) capitalism?

This is not an unrealistic question. Over the past twenty years we have circularized with pro-capitalist literature various Calvinist educators and ministers. We have had letters of approval, but we have also received specific responses evidencing extensive

hostility both to our ideas *and our person,* the latter solely because we are unashamedly and unqualifiedly in favor of capitalism. This hostility is in some cases venomous. We shall presently forebear to publish these data. Other information has been transmitted to us verbally by friends who have been shocked by the rancor against us reflected by the remarks of others. For a man to favor capitalism boldly in a Calvinist denomination is to expose himself to hatred.

Some people may immediately wish to hedge by declaring, "We are capitalists all right, but we are not *laissez-faire* capitalists." This is a quibbling about words. Modified capitalism is merely interventionism in some degree or other. *Laissez-faire* capitalism is simply capitalism with no more or less restraint on social and economic life than is prescribed by the Ten Commandments. What others allege is capitalism of a non*laissez-faire* variety is really interventionism of some degree, which interventionism is an alleged right of a government to intervene in business beyond the Ten Commandments, on the assumption (which is baseless) that that government has a charisma from God.

PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM is unqualifiedly for *laissez-faire* capitalism. We do not hesitate about that. We believe in a government to restrain evil; not a government to do good. We believe a government legitimately puts into effect the Second Table of the Law, correctly defined (see May 1955 and following issues of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM).

Mises is boldly for *laissez-faire* capitalism. In this matter he has our *unqualified* support.

After reading about the problem, as formulated by Mises — why do people hate an economic system which has done more for their well-being than any other system — it is, of course, interesting to learn what his version is of the reason for that widespread and lusty hate against capitalism (and against the person of anyone who boldly believes in the capitalistic organization of society). Why do many Calvinists hate capitalism, and anyone who openly defends capitalism, such as the editor of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM.

Mises answers the question about this hatred against capitalism by a psychological analysis rather than a moral one.

The Reason Why Men Hate Capitalism

Mises begins his answer by calling attention to the fact that under capitalism the consumer is "sovereign." The consumer buys what *he* (or she) wants. In that act each person pursues his own self-regarding interests or acts according to his own sense of values. To please people, then, you must serve them, in the sense of voluntarily complying with their free preferences. A man in a capitalistic society gets along well *in proportion as he supplies others,* those others patronizing or avoiding him, depending on his good or poor performance. Under capitalism a man's *merit* controls his success because consumers "look out" for themselves (which is not only perfectly proper but necessary in a sound society).

A society in which the consumer is sovereign is the only kind of society which has the foundation that Scripture requires. That foundation is noncoercion, or freedom, based on the Sixth Commandment, Thou shalt not kill (coerce). (There is, of course, one exception, the right to coerce for the limited purpose of resisting evils banned by the Ten Commandments.)

We are then talking of a society wherein consumers reward those who supply their wants and avoid those who do not do that equally well. This is not only a moral structure for society; it is also a rational and utilitarian structure.

Mises writes (pages 11 and 12):

> In a society based on caste and status, the individual can ascribe adverse fate to conditions beyond his own control. He is a slave because the superhuman powers that determine all becoming had assigned him this rank. It is not his doing, and there is no reason for him to be ashamed of his humbleness. His wife cannot find fault with his station. If she were to tell him: "Why are you not a duke? If you were a duke, I would be a duchess," he would reply: "If I had been born the son of a duke, I would not have married you, a slave girl, but the daughter of another duke; that you are not a duchess is exclusively your own fault; why were you not more clever in the choice of your parents?"

> It is quite another thing under capitalism. Here everybody's station in life depends on his own doing. Everybody whose ambitions have not been fully gratified knows very well that he has missed chances, that he has been tried and found wanting by his fellow man. If his wife upbraids him: "Why do you make only eighty dollars a week? If you were as smart as your former pal, Paul, you would be a foreman and I would enjoy a better life," he becomes conscious of his own inferiority and feels humiliated.

A society which Mises describes as a capitalistic society is not founded on (1) coercion, nor (2) caste or status, nor (3) egalitarianism, but (4) on freedom and on merit in the judgment of one's fellows. In a *free* market those psychological defenses which a man could advance for failure under the first three types of society (one with a tyrannical structure, or a caste structure, or an egalitarian [equalizing or leveling] structure) are all removed. Under genuine capitalism men automatically lose the excuses for their failures, or in other language, for not supplying their neighbors so well that the neighbors by their own actions make them prosperous.

Now what does every man who fails have a tendency to do next? This is Mises's answer (pages 14 and 15):

> In order to console himself and to restore his self-assertion, such a man is in search of a scapegoat. He tries to persuade himself that he failed through no fault of his own. He is at least as brilliant, efficient and industrious as those who outshine him. Unfortunately this nefarious social order of ours does not accord the prizes to the most meritorious men; it crowns the dishonest unscrupulous scoundrel, the swindler, the exploiter, the "rugged individualist." What made himself fail was his honesty. He was too decent to resort to the base tricks to which his successful rivals owe their ascendancy. As conditions are under capitalism, a man is forced to choose between virtue and poverty on the one hand, and vice and riches on the other. He, himself, thank God, chose the former alternative and rejected the latter.

> This search for a scapegoat is an attitude of people living under the social order which treats everybody according to his contribution to the well-being of his fellow men and where thus everybody is the founder of his own fortune. In such a society each member whose ambitions have not been fully satisfied resents the fortune of all those who succeeded better. The fool releases these feelings in slander and defamation. The more sophisticated do not indulge in personal calumny. They sublimate their hatred into a philosophy, the philosophy of anti-capitalism, in order to render inaudible the inner voice that tells them that their failure is entirely their own fault.

Mises next proceeds to give examples of the hatred of various types of people toward a *merit* society (or a *free* society, or a *capitalist* society — all of which are the same kind of society). He analyzes the pattern of psychological motivations in the direction of hatred and covetousness on the part of the following:

1. Intellectuals
   (a) A doctor
   (b) The *American* intellectual, as distinguished from the European
2. The white collar worker
3. The idle rich (the "cousins")
4. Actors and actresses

The pages devoted by Mises to analyses of prevalent inferiority complexes, self-pity, self-excuse, envy and hatred are uncomfortable descriptions of human nature.

The Clergy And The Economic Order

There is an interesting omission in Mises's analysis, towit, he does not analyze the psychology of anti-capitalistic clergymen, which would lay bare why *they* may unconsciously be motivated to be hostile to capitalism. We have some thoughts on that ourselves.

There was a time when a clergyman was a member of the ruling classes in his own right. He was in status and especially in education above the masses. He associated freely with the upper classes, and even exercised over them the prerogatives of spiritual authority. If he had been fortunate in advancing in the ecclesiastical hierarchy he was on a secular equality with the aristocracy. It was also possible for him to be a member of a powerful and rich religious order. (The various religious orders in the middle ages were in many instances very wealthy, their lands having been obtained by gifts or bequests in the course of many generations.) As has been often noted, churchmen in those days were steady supporters of the existing order, an order based on status and caste. They had allied themselves with "power." This was stage one.

Then came the rise of the middle classes. The middle classes were opposed to the aristocracy with its rights of caste and status and they were eminently religious. Religion then became middle class, and the clergy became the rather uncritical spiritual bodyguard of capitalism. This was stage two.

Later, as a result of the universal franchise and other modern developments, power shifted to the "proletariat," and men of the cloth again adjusted smoothly and chameleon-like to the changed conditions; religion, and men active in religion, namely, ministers and priests, became labor minded, proletarian in orientation. This is stage three, the present stage.

It should then be noted that throughout the centuries the clergy have been "realistic" and have allied themselves with whoever had *power* — first the aristocrats, then the middle class, and now the mass of the population. This is, of course, by no means true of all clergymen.

If someone is today to describe the main tenets and the main activities, say of the great Protestant denominations, he can make the answer brief as well as accurate, namely, the Christian religion today stands for the *social gospel.* Protestant clergymen accepting the social gospel far outnumber the clergymen who do not.

The *social gospel* is that manifestation of "Christianity" which consists of emphasizing the application of an allegedly "Christian" program to *this* life. Religion should not, according to this view,

lose itself in concern about life in the next world, but should concern itself about life in this world. The Kingdom of God is, for those holding to the Social Gospel, an earthly kingdom (not a heavenly one). That earthly kingdom must be accomplished here and now. In practice, the modern effort to realize an *earthly* Kingdom of God has consisted in allying the church to programs which are expected to get the support of the majority of the population.

In fact, today the most powerful voice raised for defending the *coercive* and consequently mischievous power of labor or the proletariat, or the "masses" is the demagogic voice of the clergy who teach the social gospel.

The social gospel has not developed out of the moral law; it has developed out of the adjustment of theologians and preachers to a shift in political power in the modern world; they have devised a "gospel" which would tend to make Christianity (so-called) the spiritual vanguard of whatever program the majority of the people urged on by covetousness want. The social gospel is a psychological groping for power by the clergy.

In this endeavor of the social gospel to get itself selected and accepted as the champion of those who have the most votes, it has used two specific but altogther different methods; one of these is "practical" and coercive; the other of these is allegedly "moral" and relies on persuasion (or rather, propaganda). The first of these is the encroachment of religion into practical politics; the second is the development of a new "morality" which has changed the traditional meaning of the commandment, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

The Alliance Of The Social Gospel With Practical Politics

The method by which the social gospel encroaches into the field of practical politics is evidenced by the conduct of the National Council of Churches (and its predecessors). The various decisions and actions of this Council are carefully planned and nurtured by the leading social gospel Prostestant clergymen in America. The mass of members of those denominations are

quite uninformed on what their "spiritual" leaders are doing. The social gospel clergy effectively control the ecclesiastical machinery of the denominations of which they are a part.

The method of social gospel clergymen for aggrandizing themselves in the arena of practical politics is interesting. The pattern is as follows:

1. They endeavor to unite *all* Protestant denominations into one organization, presently the National Council of Churches. On this basis 35,000,000 people are *alleged* to be represented by the National Council of Churches.

2. The social gospel *leaders* then develop their specific programs. These are not restricted to moral principles but extend to practical statecraft and politics. For example, some social gospel leaders may be opposed to the proposed Bricker Amendment to the Constitution. This is obviously a problem in government organization and is not a specific moral question. A committee of the National Council has reached a decision and made a declaration against the proposed Bricker Amendment.

3. The next two steps are parallel in time but not in character. (a) First, the Council publishes its Committee's decision and declares that it is the attitude that the faithful should take toward this Bricker Amendment or whatever the subject may be. (b) Second, representatives of the Council testify in Washington before committees and they lobby in Congress, alleging that the decision which was reached by its committee is the conscience and voice of 35,000,000 people. The implication is that the Council speaks directly for more than 20 percent of the population of the country.

To be able to allege that he speaks with so many people behind him, and with the weight of such great numbers, would flatter any man's vanity. A social gospel clergyman also feels that way about it. It "compensates" him for many inferiority complexes under which he labors. Who would not be happy, yea, even thankful, for his lot in life if he has the conviction that he is the leader of 35,000,000 people in matters pertaining to practical political policy.

The National Council of Churches puts itself forward as a great *ecumenical* movement. A more accurate description would be that it is an agency to satisfy the morale of social gospel leaders, who are happy to think that the people are behind them so that they may be reassured that they are significant in life.

The New Morality Of The Social Gospel

As an agency to support subjective morale the acquisition of political power is a trifle compared with self-satisfaction which can come from establishing for self the reputation of being a *moral* leader and legislator. To teach morality is about as flattering to vanity as anything can be. There are always the moral heights from which to look at the rest of mankind. The National Council of Churches has undertaken to be the legislator of new "moral" laws. It no longer is satisfied with *justice;* it wants something different from justice, and it designates what it wants by a modern name, *social* justice. Obviously, if *social justice* were the same thing as *justice,* it would not be necessary to apply a new name, which is why the term *social justice* has succeeded the different term, justice.

Under the term, *social* justice, the social gospel has developed a new, fantastic, sanctimonious and destructive set of ethics. We hope to analyze these in detail some day.

Suffice to say, at this point, that it is our opinion that the claim of social gospel clergymen to be moral legislators and judges is a psychological compensation for them in their rapidly deteriorating position in the world. As their religious influence becomes less, their voice becomes louder, and their moral requirements which they say men must follow the more unreasonable. They have actually made Christianity sanctimonious, and eventually socially destructive.

Anyone genuinely trained in the social sciences realizes that the prevailing religion of the social gospel represents tragic ignorance of the realities of life. In exact proportion as any church accepts the social gospel its hold (influence, control) over the rational intellect and sober judgment of its members declines. The intellectuals drift out of the church. Church attendance

finally largely consists of a few young women who think it desirable that their children have a church background, and a considerable number of old women who need religion to comfort their declining years. This is in a degree true of all churches. The Christian Reformed church, too, is in danger of losing influence over its intellectuals at a steadily increasing rate; the trend will continue unless the denomination returns to intellectual respectability.

* * *

By both methods, (1) the *political* program of the National Council of Churches, and (2) by developing for themselves the leadership of the proletariat by teaching the social gospel and approving or at least not disapproving the coercive activities of the labor organizations, and other minorities and majorities the clergy today relieves itself of its inferiority complex, gratifies its own ego, and manifests its own hatred of a *merit* society, a *free* society, a *noncoercive* society, a *scriptural* society.

Present Economic Unfairness To The Clergy

There is, it should be admitted, a peculiar—and understandable—explanation for the popular hostility among the clergy against the existing order. That justification is the low monetary remuneration which clergymen generally receive. There are exceptions, but for the vast majority of the clergy, the salary is unduly low.

A clergyman has spent long years in getting his education. Considering his talents and education he could, in some of the other professions and in business, earn far more than he earns as a clergyman.

There are, it is true, important nonmonetary rewards that go with being a clergyman. But when everything is considered, clergymen today, because of the importance for society of the proper performance of their profession, are probably less well paid, in combined monetary and nonmonetary rewards, than at any time in the history of Christianity.

Our opinion is that the salaries of ministers (for example, in the Christian Reformed church) should in general be very sub-

stantially increased in order to be in proper relation to their services.

The ironic thing about the situation is that few clergymen understand the "economics" of what is going on. They seem not to realize that their ethics and their political and labor alliances act boomerang-like and recoil on them to impoverish themselves. This brings us to an idea which we have heard Mises suggest, namely *a chair in economics* (held by a *sound* economist) *should be established in every theological school.*

Of course, if ministers wish to "protect" themselves by the same policy that they approve in the case of "labor," then they will form a union, go on strike, have a picket line at church services, and especially at funerals and weddings, and so drive up their salaries. They will find it useful to employ a business agent and to require compulsory membership in their union. Anyone who will not join the preachers' union will have to be prohibited from functioning as a preacher.

However, if ministers wish to form a noncoercive, say a scriptural labor union, we shall be glad to discuss the economics of that with them. We shall not, however, be ready to agree to many of the prevalent union practices that ministers now generally approve for unions. We are prepared, however, to be a business agent for a legitimate union for those who are obviously being exploited. If unions are a good thing for "labor" why should they not be equally good for clergymen?

Mises's Explanation Basically Refers To The Sin Of Covetousness

But returning to Mises's thesis: what explains the disinterest and even natural hatred of all men to capitalism? The answer is a psychological phenomenon based on pride and egoism, fortified by envy, jealousy and covetousness.

We are all unhappy that the other man is more successful, in something or other, than we ourselves are. Few of us have learned that there is no happiness to be built on another's unhappiness. Our "happiness" has a constant tendency to deteriorate into gloating over another man's failure or mediocrity or lower

position. This is one of the practical manifestations of the lack of brotherly love.

Practically every organization today is endeavoring by coercion to keep the other fellow down. If he rises by merit he must have been "unbrotherly" somehow. It is all right to envy his success, and to frustrate him in his efforts. The commandment of Moses, Thou shalt not covet, is neglected so that it has become the "deadest" commandment in the Decalogue. The social gospel's principal function is to neutralize the Tenth Commandment.

So much for a brief summary of the ideas in the first chapter of Mises's book.

The remaining chapters do not deal with the popular *motivation* to covetousness and with the hatred against capitalism and capitalists, but with the content of the "social philosophy" of the average man. Mises not only describes that social philosophy but also supplies the arguments which discredit it. This material is extraordinarily valuable. It shows the roots of popular and naive ideas and clearly indicates why those ideas are erroneous and pernicious.

Consider what Mises writes about the "progressive" writers, the *literati* as he calls them. He writes (pages 61 and 62):

> As the progressive dogmatist sees things, there are two groups of men quarreling about how much of the "national income" each of them should take for themselves. The propertied class, the entrepreneurs and the capitalists, to whom they often refer as "management," is not prepared to leave to "labor"—i.e., the wage earners and employees—more than a trifle, just a little bit more than bare sustenance. Labor, as may easily be understood, annoyed by management's greed, is inclined to lend an ear to the radicals, to the communists, who want to expropriate management entirely. However, the majority of the working class is moderate enough not to indulge in excessive radicalism. They reject communism and are ready to content themselves with less than the total confiscation of "unearned" income. They aim at a

> middle-of-the-road solution, at planning, the welfare state, socialism. In this controversy the intellectuals who allegedly do not belong to either of the two opposite camps are called to act as arbiters. They—the professors, the representatives of science, and the writers, the representatives of literature—must shun the extremists of each group, those who recommend capitalism as well as those who endorse communism. They must side with the moderates. They must stand for planning, the welfare state, socialism, and they must support all measures designed to curb the greed of management and to prevent it from abusing its economic power.

This description of the ideas of the *literati* equally well fits the prevailing ideas in Reformed (Calvinist) circles in the Netherlands and in the United States. There is the same rejection of both communism and capitalism, and the same pretense of a lofty middle-of-the-road position, untainted with either the evils of capitalism or the evils of communism. The criticism by members of the Christian Reformed church of what appears in PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM is along this line, namely, neither communism *nor capitalism* are tolerable.

Mises also considers the charges against capitalism of (1) not providing happiness; (2) of materialism; (3) of injustice; etc.

What Mises writes about "injustice" is especially interesting. In the course of his argument he writes (pages 80-82):

> The worst of all these delusions is the idea that "nature" has bestowed upon every man certain rights. According to this doctrine nature is openhanded toward every child born. There is plenty of everything for everybody. Consequently, everyone has a fair inalienable claim against all his fellow men and against society that he should get the full portion which nature has allotted to him. The eternal laws of natural and divine justice require that nobody should appropriate to himself what by rights belongs to other people. The poor are needy only because unjust people have deprived them of their birthright. It is the task of the church and the secular

authorities to prevent such spoliation and to make all people prosperous.

> Every word of this doctrine is false. Nature is not bountiful but stingy. It has restricted the supply of all things indispensable for the preservation of human life. It has populated the world with animals and plants to whom the impulse to destroy human life and welfare is inwrought. It displays powers and elements whose operation is damaging to human life and to human endeavors to preserve it. Man's survival and well-being are an achievement of the skill with which he has utilized the main instrument with which nature has equipped him—reason. Men, cooperating under the system of the division of labor, have created all the wealth which the daydreamers consider as a free gift of nature. With regard to the "distribution" of this wealth, it is nonsensical to refer to an allegedly divine or natural principle of justice. What matters is not the allocation of portions out of a fund presented to man by nature. The problem is rather to further those social institutions which enable people to continue and to enlarge the production of all those things which they need.

What Mises is here doing is declaring that it is necessary to have a sound perspective of reality, a sound cosmogony. The interesting thing is that in this matter he independently concurs perfectly with Moses. Moses declared that there would be a *welfareshortage.** Mises declares the same thing. Unless one acknowledges and keeps in mind that fundamental fact, the existence of a permanent welfareshortage, all subsequent reasoning will be fallacious. But that is exactly the fact which most men, including theologians, assume is not the fact.

One more reference. What is the eventual outcome of believing in interventionism as most Calvinist leaders do? Will interventionism save us? Mises says, No. He calls attention to the fact that Marx and Engels recommended interventionist measures by governments *in order to destroy capitalism and usher*

*See July 1956 issue of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM, page 209.

in communism. Marx and Engels described the interventionist measures they recommended (which Abraham Kuyper also recommended, which the Anti-Revolutionary Party in the Netherlands also recommends, which Professor H. J. Ryskamp also accepts) as: "economically insufficient and untenable" and they stated that those interventionist measures "in the course of the movement outstrip themselves, necessitate further inroads upon the old social order, and are unavoidable as a means of entirely revolutionizing the mode of production."

Here we have an astonishing situation: the interventionism recommended by Abraham Kuyper and his followers in order to save capitalism is the same interventionism recommended by Marx in order to destroy capitalism. Marx's idea is the more realistic of the two.

Mises some years back wrote an article entitled "Middle-of-the-Road Policy Leads to Socialism." We sent a copy to ministers in the Christian Reformed church (and to others), because we knew that the majority favored interventionism which, as we have just quoted, Marx and Engels declared in their *Communist Manifesto* would lead to communism. But we have received little thanks for spreading an article which revealed that popular and pious interventionism is the high road to communism—*eventually.*

There is proof, which every Netherlander or anyone informed about the Netherlands can understand, in regard to Mises's proposition, towit: that the "middle-of-the-road policy leads to socialism," on the ground that it leads to more and more government controls, that is, *dirigisme.* That proof is the trend in the platform of the Anti-Revolutionary Party. Under the leadership of Abraham Kuyper, it wanted *some* modest controls. But every control begets the need of more controls, and the Anti-Revolutionary Party in its platform today is committed to so many controls that it can be written off as a party promoting righteousness or real freedom. Instead it has a platform which compromises with coercion in every phase of life, outside of the churches and the schools. Unless it returns to first principles the Anti-Revolutionary Party will end up as socialism, and maybe communism.

How natural it is for controls (1) to expand; and (2) to be contrary-to-purpose can be made clear by a brief quotation from Mises's essay entitled "Middle-of-the-Road Policy Leads to Socialism," pages 11-12:

> The government believes that the price of a definite commodity, e.g., milk, is too high. It wants to make it possible for the poor to give their children more milk. Thus it resorts to a price ceiling and fixes the price of milk at a lower rate than that prevailing on the free market. The result is that the marginal producers of milk, those producing at the highest cost, now incur losses. As no individual farmer or businessman can go on producing at a loss, these marginal producers stop producing and selling milk on the market. They will use their cows and their skill for other more profitable purposes. They will, for example, produce butter, cheese or meat. There will be less milk available for the consumers, not more. This, of course, is contrary to the intentions of the government. It wanted to make it easier for some people to buy more milk. But, as an outcome of its interference, the supply available drops. The measure proves abortive from the very point of view of the government and the groups it was eager to favor. It brings about a state of affairs, which—again from the point of view of the government—is even less desirable than the previous state of affairs which it was designed to improve.
>
> Now, the government is faced with an alternative. It can abrogate its decree and refrain from any further endeavors to control the price of milk. But if it insists upon its intention to keep the price of milk below the rate the unhampered market would have determined and wants nonetheless to avoid a drop in the supply of milk, it must try to eliminate the causes that render the marginal producers' business unremunerative. It must add to the first decree concerning only the price of milk a second decree fixing the prices of the factors of production*

*"Factors of production": such items as prices of hay and grain. (P. C. Editor)

> necessary for the production of milk at such a low rate that the marginal producers of milk will no longer suffer losses and will therefore abstain from restricting output. But then the same story repeats itself on a remoter plane. . . .

The foregoing is simple logic. Read *carefully* what it says and you will know why the Anti-Revolutionary Party in the Netherlands is on the way to dissolution—unless it reforms itself. The ideas (1) that controls can be easily limited to a restricted field, (2) that they are not contrary to purpose, and (3) that they consequently do not lead toward socialism—all these are bad fallacies, interventionists in any country or church to the contrary notwithstanding.

We strongly recommend that readers read this new book by Mises: *The Anti-Capitalistic Mentality.*

Mises's Other Books

We list Mises's other books in the order in which we recommend readers to read them (on the basis of ease of reading):

Planning For Freedom, Libertarian Press, 366 East 166th Street, South Holland, Illinois, 1952, 175 pages, $1.50 paperbound, $3.00 clothbound.

Bureaucracy, Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut, 1944, 125 pages, $2.00.

Omnipotent Government, Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut, 1944, 291 pages, $4.00. This book explains how the Germans, a great and respectable people, became immoral because of the way they thought *on economic matters.* America thinks the same way today—fifty years behind the Germans—and we are likely to end up with the same infamous conduct. As a man thinketh in his heart, so he is.

Socialism, Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut, 1951, 591 pages, $5.00. This book is a final and conclusive argument that Socialism *cannot* be a valid principle for the economic organization of society, because it destroys the basis for all economic calculation.

The Theory Of Money And Credit, Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut, 1953, 493 pages, $5.00. This the most valuable of any publication in the field of money and credit. In it Mises not only explains the basic ideas in regard to money and credit, but he shows that unsound credit policies are the cause of the business cycle—the great bane of our present economic system.

Human Action, Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut, 1949, 889 pages, $10.00. This is the most comprehensive of all economic texts ever published. This book is for capitalism what Marx's *Das Kapital* is for socialism.

The last three especially establish firmly Mises's reputation as being one of the greatest economists of all time. fn

Economists And Authors Writing About The Economic Structure Of Society

We have prepared a chart of the names of economists and of other writers about the economic structure of society in such a form that readers can tell at a glance when they lived and how we classify them.

In this chart time is shown on the horizontal scale. When a man lived can be determined from the chart or (more exactly) from the accompanying table of statistics.

The chart contains the names of many famous economists, but not all of them. It contains also names of some not-so-famous economists; these names are included for special reasons which readers will understand in the future.

There is an admittedly arbitrary classification of these names into three groups:

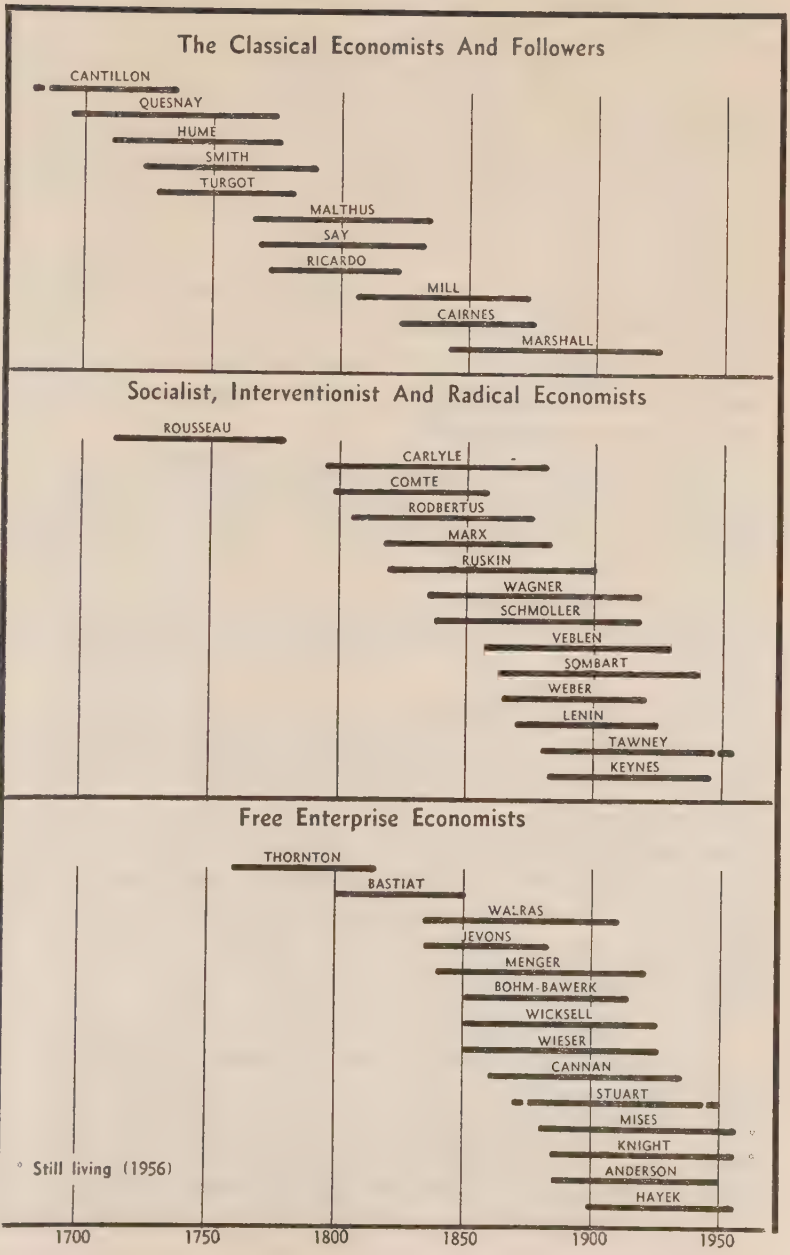
1. The Classical economists and others in that tradition.

2. Socialist, Interventionist or radical economists and writers with whom Progressive Calvinism is in disagreement.

Economists And Authors Writing About The Economic Structure Of Society

The Classical Economists And Others In That Tradition		Socialist, Interventionist And Radical Economists And Writers		Free Enterprise Economists With Whom Progressive Calvinism Generally Agrees	
c.1680-1734	Richard Cantillon	1712- 1778	J. J. Rousseau	1760- 1815	Henry Thornton
1694-1774	Francois Quesnay	1795- 1881	Thomas Carlyle	1801- 1850	Frederic Bastiat
1711-1776	David Hume	1798- 1857	Auguste Comte	1834- 1910	Léon Walras
1723-1790	Adam Smith	1805- 1875	Johann Rodbertus	1835- 1882	William Jevons
1727-1781	Anne R. J. Turgot	1818- 1883	Karl Marx	1840- 1921	Carl Menger
1766-1834	Thomas Malthus	1819- 1900	John Ruskin	1851- 1914	Eugen von Böhm-Bawerk
1767-1832	J. B. Say	1835- 1917	Adolph Wagner	1851- 1926	Knut Wicksell
1772-1823	David Ricardo	1838- 1917	Gustav von Schmoller	1851- 1926	Friedrich von Wieser
1806-1873	John Stuart Mill	1857- 1929	Thorstein Veblen	1861- 1935	Edwin Cannan
1823-1875	John Cairnes	1863- 1941	Werner Sombart	1865- 1948	C. A. Verryn Stuart
1842-1924	Alfred Marshall	1864- 1920	Max Weber	1881-	Ludwig von Mises
		1870- 1924	Nikolai Lenin	1885-	Frank H. Knight
		1880-	Richard Tawney	1886- 1949	Benjamin M. Anderson
		1883- 1946	John M. Keynes	1899-	Friedrich von Hayek

Economists And Authors Writing About The Economic Structure Of Society



3. Free Enterprise economists with whose economics we in general agree.

We make a few descriptive remarks.

The Classicists

Cantillon, a Frenchman, is the earliest great thinker in economics.

Adam Smith is in a class by himself.

Ricardo retired early, as a well-to-do financial broker and has a great place as an economic theorist.

Malthus is famous for his treatise on population. We plan eventually to discuss Malthus's population theory and its economic and other consequences.

Mill is not one of the great economists, but he wrote a very popular text on economics. He is more famous as an essayist; see his essay, for example, "On Liberty." We are *for liberty* as Mill was.

Turgot and Quesnay are Frenchmen of the well-known Physiocrat school of thought. We have taken some liberty in including them with the classicists.

Cairnes, Say and Marshall are in the list designated "Classical economists and others in that tradition" because they were not classifiable (for us) among the socialistic writers nor were they different enough from the earlier classicists to put us at ease about classifying them with the Free Enterprise economists. There may be question especially about Alfred Marshall being in this first group. Some readers may wish to put him in the third (Free Enterprise) group, but Marshall has always seemed to us to occupy an equivocal and unfruitful position.

The greatest of the classical economists, Adam Smith, has been claimed as godfather as much by socialist economists as by free enterprise economists. This may sound unbelievable, but nevertheless it is true. The explanation is that Smith did not probe to the depths the basic issues involved, and he wrote inconsistently on some very vital subjects. In that sense, Smith (and the other famous classical economists) are inadequate for solving

today's problems. How can Adam Smith have been consistent in his writings if Marx and Mises can both refer to him as a forerunner and as an authority? Anyone, therefore, intending to begin and to end his economic education with reading Smith's famous book *The Wealth of Nations* has a defective economic education. If in economics a man has the time to read one book only we do not recommend this great classic; too much of it is defective and has been superseded.

The Socialists And Radicals

In this list are the writers with whose principles we do not agree.

Rousseau is one of the fountain-heads of the French Revolution.

Comte is the father of Positivism which involved the improper extension of the methodology of the physical sciences to the social sciences.

Rodbertus and Marx are the two most-famous writers on the *doctrine* of socialism and communism. They are the fathers of so-called scientific socialism.

Schmoller, Wagner, Sombart and Weber belong to the socialistic German Historical school, who were short on economic theory and long on economic history (statistical and historical description).

Thorstein Veblen is mentioned as an American Institutionalist. Institutionalist economics is the American counterpart of the German Historical school. The Institutionalists have had a baneful effect on American economic thought.

Ruskin and Carlyle were not economists but they taught destructive social and economic doctrines. As *literati* they did more to pervert ideas on a sound fabric for society than equally mistaken but trained *technical* economists whose influence was less than theirs.

Keynes is the modern economist who has had the greatest influence for evil. The devastating effect of his ideas is worldwide.

Tawney is one of the socialist *literati* highly regarded by many Calvinist intellectuals but not by Progressive Calvinism.

We might have added to the list names such as Niebuhr, Schlesinger and Boulding who are also highly regarded by some Calvinists.

Free Enterprise Economists

In this classification are the men to whom readers should turn for a more-satisfactory economic education.

Henry Thornton is in this list because we plan to refer especially to him. He was an important member of the famous evangelical group known as the Clapham Sect, which founded the English Bible Society.

In PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM we are in the Jevons-Walras-Menger-BohmBawerk-Wieser-Mises-Hayek tradition. They build on the great classical economists, but basically correct the errors in the theories of the classicists. Jevons was an Englishman; Walras was a Swiss; the others are known as the Austrian school. If we must name *only* three men whom we follow most closely it will be the three Austrians — Menger, Bohm-Bawerk, and Mises, especially Mises. Hayek is a famous essayist as well as economist.

Bastiat was a devout Catholic; his writings are of a more popular character than those of the others.

Wicksell, a Scandinavian; Cannan, an Englishman; Verrijn-Stuart, a Netherlander; and Frank H. Knight and Benjamin M. Anderson, Americans, are modern outstanding economists in the "school of economic thought" to which we in general belong.

On the basis of the foregoing, readers who are acquainted with the literature of economics will be able to bracket the position of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM in the field of economic theory. In a general sense we are aligned with economists (1) who hold to the "subjective theory of value"; (2) who think in terms of marginal utility; and (3) who are for individual freedom and opposed to socialist and interventionist coercion.

The economists we follow are some of the greatest economic theoreticians thus far in the history of economic science. These men are not in our list because they are "Christians"; they are in our list

because the "economic order" which they favor is in harmony with the "moral order" prescribed by Scripture.

There are, of course, many great names which we have omitted from our list of free enterprise authors. Nothing unfavorable is implied by the omission. The names we have included are in some respects simply representative. Other representative names might have been selected.

The Christian religion teaches theology and ethics. Ethics, of course, underlies the "economic order" of society and is determinative for private conduct. The question arises then: where ethics and economics meet and practically flow together, which ethics go with which economics? In general, social gospel ethics go with socialist and interventionist economics. In general, *historic* Christian ethics go with the free enterprise group, despite any personal disinterest or hostility of a free enterprise economist to Christian theology.

The schematic information we have here presented is intended to be a background for some major attention to the destructiveness for society of the social gospel. The principles of the social gospel are presently being assiduously promoted in otherwise orthodox Calvinist denominations.

An attack on the social gospel can be on its intellectual aspects or on its moral aspects. We intend to attack it on both fronts — as intellectually untenable and as morally sanctimonious and consequently malignant.

In the January 1957 issue we shall consider the social gospel in the light of one of the essays in *God-Centered Living,* where the unfortunate relationship between Calvinism and the social gospel can be clearly read. fn

The January 1957 Issue

The January 1957 issue of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM will be devoted largely to the "social gospel," which PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM considers to be one of the greatest evils in the world.

Attention will be given to the device by which the social gospel is being successfully introduced into an otherwise conservative

denomination, the Christian Reformed church, while hardly anyone is aware of what is occurring.

Notice To Subscribers

This issue completes the second year of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM.

Subscriptions are on a *calendar*-year basis, from January each year through December. We shall appreciate those intending to renew their subscription to do so in December or in January 1957. The subscription price is $2 for all except students for whom the price is $1.

Paperbound copies of the 1956 issues will be available in a month or so at $2 a copy.

We solicit new subscribers for 1957. Such subscribers should begin their reading of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM with the first issue, January 1955. As a special offer to 1957 subscribers, we will provide paperbound copies of 1955 and 1956 at a combined price of $3; that, plus the new subscription of $2 for 1957, is a total of $5. There are 368 pages in the 1955 volume, and 384 pages in the 1956 volume.

Renew *now*, subscribe *now*.

Correction

The book review in this issue is not the one referred to on page 330 in the November 1956 issue. That reference is to a book by Edmund Opitz entitled *The Powers That Be* which we plan to review early in 1957.

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